

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 IO-11 JUSE-00 NSAE-00

SNM-02 TRSE-00 USIA-06 NSC-05 OES-03 OMB-01 SS-15

AID-05 HEW-02 L-03 DODE-00 ARAE-00 H-02 /073 W

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P R 031641Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3811

INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

DEA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BOGOTA 2298

DEPARTMENT FOR ARA DEPUTY ASST SEC LUERS AND S/NM VANCE

DEA FOR EOIL

CARACAS FOR DEA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR CO

SUBJECT: PERCEPTUAL FACTORS IN US-GOC NARCOTICS COOPERATION

REF: STATE 40131

1. THE POTENTIAL FOR MUTUAL MISUNDERSTANDING ON NARCOTICS AID TO COLOMBIA, AND EVEN FOR A DISPUTE BETWEEN OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS, INCREASES TO THE EXTENT WE FAIL TO UNDERSTAND OR TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE DIFFERENCES WHICH EXIST BETWEEN US IN PERCEPTION AND CONDITIONING. (OUR SEPARATE REPLY TO REFTEL EXPRESSES SOME OF OUR CONCERNS IN THIS REGARD.) THIS CABLE THEREFORE RECAPITULATES IN SOME DETAIL THE GOC PERCEPTION AND REASONS THEREFOR IN THE HOPE THAT IT WILL BE HELPFUL AS WE ALL COME TO GRIPS WITH THE ISSUE.

2. THE GOC POSITION AND LOGIC HAS SEVERAL SEPARATE STRANDS. FIRST, IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT THE TOP ECHELON, STARTING WITH THE PRESIDENT, DO NOT RPT NOT CONSIDER NARCOTICS A COLOMBIAN PROBLEM WITH WHICH THE US HAS OFFERED TO

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HELP. RATHER THEY VIEW IT AS THE REVERSE. IT IS IMPORTANT

TO REMEMBER WHAT PRESIDENT LOPEZ SAID PRIOR TO HIS STATE VISIT (75 BOGOTA 8826). THAT IS THE WAY HE REALLY FEELS. HE FREQUENTLY COMPARES THE INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS SITUATION TO THE 18TH CENTURY OPIUM WARS, AS HE DID IN THAT STATEMENT.

HE DOES NOT SAY THIS TO AVOID ACTION OR COOPERATION OR JUST TO NEEDLE US, BUT IN ORDER TO MAKE CLEAR WHAT HE BELIEVES IS THE TRUE PERSPECTIVE, I.E. THAT, WHILE THIS IS AN INTERNATIONAL PROBLEM, THE NATION WITH THE MOST AT STAKE BOTH AS VICTIM AND CAUSE--AND THEREFORE WITH PERHAPS THE GREATEST OBLIGATION FOR ACTION--IS THE UNITED STATES.

3. THE GOC RECOGNIZES THE IMPACT OF THE DRUG TRAFFIC ON COLOMBIA, IS WORRIED ABOUT IT AND SINCERELY WANTS TO ELIMINATE IT. IT ACCEPTS OUR FORMULATION THAT THE PROBLEM IS SERIOUS DIFFICULT AND REQUIRES MAJOR ACTION. ONE CANNOT FAULT THE PRESIDENT AND HIS MINISTERS ON THEIR SINCERITY AND READINESS TO TAKE ACTION. THE GOC BELIEVES THAT THE TRAFFICKERS ARE WELL-FINANCED, WELL ORGANIZED AND SOPHISTICATED AND ARE THEREFORE FORMIDABLE FOES. IT DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT IT ALONE HAS THE RESOURCES TO MATCH THE TRAFFICKERS. THEREFORE IT FEELS THAT IF AN INTERDICTION EFFORT IS TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN COLOMBIA WE MUST HELP.

4. PRESIDENT LOPEZ BELIEVES THAT PRESIDENT FORD AND THE SECRETARY PROMISED THAT THE US WOULD SUPPORT A MAJOR COLOMBIAN INTERDICTION EFFORT. HE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE 1.3 MILLION DOLLARS MENTIONED AS ALREADY EARMARKED THIS YEAR, WAS AN EXAMPLE, NOT A LIMIT. HE UNDERSTOOD THAT AID WOULD BE SUBSTANTIAL BUT REALISTIC IN TERMS OF WHAT IS POSSIBLE AND NEEDED. THE PRESIDENT AND THE GOC BELIEVE THAT ELIMINATION OF COLOMBIA AS THE MAIN TRAFFICKING CENTER FOR COCAINE IS ALSO A USG WISH AND OBJECTIVE.

5. AT THIS POINT I REFER TO THE STATEMENT AT THE END OF PARA 4 OF REFTEL THAT "WE DO NOT WISH IN ANYWAY TO ENCOURAGE UNREALISTIC GOC EXPECTATIONS WHICH, IF NOT MET, WOULD LEAD TO A DIMINUTION OF THE COLOMBIAN EFFORT". LEAVING ASIDE THE ADJECTIVE "UNREALISTIC" FOR A MOMENT--WE SHOULD NOT DELUDE OURSELVES THAT THE GOC HAS NOT BEEN ENCOURAGED. WE HAVE LONG SINCE PASSED THAT POINT. THE COLOMBIANS HAVE INDEED FELT ENCOURAGED TO BELIEVE
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WE WOULD EXTEND SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT IF THEY WOULD UNDERTAKE A MAJOR EFFORT. THIS OCCURRED IN THE CONVERSATIONS IN WASHINGTON; IT CONTINUED DURING THE DISCUSSIONS WITH CODELS JAVITS AND WOLFF. AND IF THERE IS STILL ANY DOUBT ONE HAS ONLY TO READ THE LAST PARAGRAPH OF PRESIDENT FORD'S FEBRUARY 23 STATEMENT (STATE 45483). THOSE ADJECTIVES ARE UNQUALIFIED.

6. THE THREAD THEREFORE RUNS SOMETHING LIKE THIS: THE GOC BELIEVES THE TRAFFICKING PROBLEM IS SERIOUS AND HUGE, THAT IT CANNOT FIGHT IT BY ITSELF, THAT THE US HAS PROMISED AID-- AND INDEED HAS BOTH AN INTEREST AND AN OBLIGATION TO DO SO-- AND HAS IN EFFECT INVITED A MUTUAL MAJOR EFFORT.

7. AT THIS POINT, THE GOC LOGIC IS SIMPLE, PERHAPS SIMPLISTIC. IT BELIEVES THAT IF YOU SET AN OBJECTIVE YOU DO SO INTENDING TO DEVOTE THE NECESSARY RESOURCES TO IT. AS FAR AS THE GOC IS CONCERNED, IF IT IS GOING TO TAKE ACTION IN THIS FIELD IT WANTS TO SHARPLY REDUCE THE TRAFFICKING PROBLEM, NOT JUST CONTAIN OR HOLD IT. THEREFORE WHAT IT SET ABOUT WAS A MAJOR, MASSIVE NATIONAL EFFORT. (IT USES THE PHRASEOLOGY--AS THE FOREIGN MINISTER DID--THAT THE PROBLEM REQUIRES US TO "WAGE WAR" ON THE TRAFFICKERS; THIS MILITARY IMAGERY MAY DISTURB PARTS OF OUR BUREAUCRACY BUT IT FAITHFULLY REFLECTS THE COMMITMENT AND SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH THE GOC VIEWS THE ISSUE.)

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INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

DEA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BOGOTA 2298

8. THE PROPOSED PLAN INVOLVING MOD "GENERALSHIP" OF THE NARCOTICS EFFORT IS A TYPICAL, AND IN SOME WAYS THE ONLY POSSIBLE, IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE CONCEPTS. IF AN ALL-OUT EFFORT IS TO BE WAGED, THE GOC REASONS, IT MUST BE NATION-WIDE WITH ALL RESOURCES MOBILIZED. THIS MEANS-- AS IT MEANT DURING THE VIOLENCIA, DURING THE COUNTER-INSURGENCY,

AND DURING THE CURRENT KIDNAPPING WAVE--THAT THE MILITARY MUST BE BROUGHT IN. THE NECESSARY COORDINATION CANNOT EFFECTIVELY BE PROVIDED, IN THE PRESIDENT'S VIEW, EXCEPT BY THE MOD WHICH STANDS ABOVE AND OUTSIDE OF THE INDIVIDUAL SERVICES NOW ACTING.

9. IN SHORT, WHAT HAS HAPPENED IS THAT THE GOC HAS RESPONDED TO OUR PROFESSED CONCERNS, TAKING OUR WORDS AT FACE VALUE TO MEAN THAT WE ARE SERIOUS ABOUT WANTING TO END THE COCAINE PROBLEM. THEY ARE IN SUM CALLING OUR BET--ASKING US TO PUT OUR MONEY WHERE OUR MOUTH IS. THEY ARE, IN EFFECT, TESTING WHETHER WE REALLY MEAN WHAT WE SAY, I.E. ARE WE PREPARED TO PAY THE COST OF AN "ALL-OUT EFFORT" AS PRESIDENT FORD SAID, OR WHETHER WE ARE IN EFFECT SAYING WE WILL HELP IF IT DOES NOT COST TOO MUCH.

10. WHAT THEN ARE REALISTIC AND UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS? THE GOC HAS WITHOUT QUESTION PROBED TO SEE HOW CONFIDENTIAL

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MUCH EQUIPMENT IT CAN GET; WHAT DID IT HAVE TO LOSE? I DOUBT VERY MUCH IF ANY COLOMBIAN OFFICIAL REALLY SUPPOSED THAT ANYTHING LIKE \$50 MILLION WOULD BE FORTHCOMING. BUT THIS KIND OF OPENING GAMBIT SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN TO MEAN THAT THE GOC IS NOT SERIOUS OR SINCERE ABOUT WANTING TO COMBAT THE PROBLEM MASSIVELY AND NATIONALLY. WHILE \$50 MILLION WAS THE BLUE SKY OPTIMUM, NEVERTHELESS THEY DO BELIEVE THAT A NECESSARY EFFORT--IF WE ARE SERIOUS--IS IN THE 10-15 MILLION RANGE (THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S PRIVATE ESTIMATE TO ME; I DID NOT COMMENT).

11. WE ARE FACED WITH THE REAL POSSIBILITY OF TWO DISTASTEFUL OUTCOMES--ON THE ONE HAND, THE MISSING OF AN OPPORTUNITY TO MOUNT AN EFFECTIVE COMBINED EFFORT BECAUSE WE ARE UNABLE TO PUT UP THE SUPPORTING RESOURCES TO THE DEGREE REQUIRED, AND, ON THE OTHER, A SCENARIO IN WHICH EACH GOVERNMENT CHARGES THE OTHER WITH BAD FAITH AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR FAILING TO MOUNT AN EFFECTIVE EFFORT.

12. THE DANGER DEPENDS IN LARGE PART ON HOW OUR TWO SETS OF PERCEPTIONS AND CONCEPTIONS--EACH EQUALLY EGOCENTRIC AND DETERMINED BY RESPECTIVE DOMESTIC ENVIRONMENTS--ACCOMMODATE TO EACH OTHER. OUR BUREAUCRACY IS, EXPLICABLY, SENSITIVE TO CONGRESSIONAL CONSIDERATIONS (MANY OF WHICH ARE CONTRADICTORY) AND SO WE ARE, EXPLICABLY, HYPERSENSITIVE TO BUDGET LEVELS, MILITARY INVOLVEMENT AND HOW SURELY WE CAN GUARANTEE WHAT WILL HAPPEN. WE SEEM TO HAVE BEEN TAKEN ABACK BY THE ALACRITY AND MAGNITUDE OF COLOMBIA'S RESPONSE TO OUR GENERAL URGINGS, AND NOW DO NOT KNOW HOW TO FIT IT ALL IN. THE QUESTION IS TO WHAT

DEGREE WE REMAIN TOTALLY OBSESSED WITH OUR BUREAUCRATIC REQUIREMENTS AND TRY TO UNIVERSALIZE THEM AS THE "REAL" ENVIRONMENT WITHIN WHICH WE MUST WORK. WE HAVE TO GRAPPLE WITH THESE PRACTICAL MATTERS, OF COURSE, BUT LET US UNDERSTAND CLEARLY THAT TO THE DEGREE WE CANNOT ACCOMMODATE OR MUTUALLY ADJUST TO EACH GOVERNMENT'S NEEDS AND PERCEPTIONS AND TO THE INTRINSIC REALITY OF THE SITUATION ITSELF, WE RISK A SERIOUS PROBLEM INDEED.

13. ONE FINAL COMMENT: REFTEL STATES THAT "...WE ARE CONFIDENT EMBASSY HAS NOT IMPLIED ANY COMMITMENT ON CONFIDENTIAL

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SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF GOC REQUEST...ETC.". MY EXPERIENCE IS THAT THAT KIND OF PHRASING USUALLY REFLECTS SOME UNSPOKEN SUSPICION OR FEAR THAT THE EXACT OPPOSITE DID IN FACT OCCUR. IF WASHINGTON HAS ANY SUCH FEAR OR SUSPICION, PLEASE REST EASILY. NEITHER I NOR ANY MEMBER OF MY STAFF HAS IMPLIED ANY COMMITMENT NOR HAVE WE LED THE COLOMBIANS ON. I DO REMIND YOU, HOWEVER, THAT OUR WILLINGNESS TO PROVIDE HELICOPTERS WAS SPECIFICALLY EXPRESSED IN THE PRESIDENTIAL CONVERSATIONS IN WASHINGTON LAST SEPTEMBER.
VAKY

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